

THE FIRST 15

Monday, August 19, 2024

Please be in continued prayer for our team currently in Tanzania serving alongside Zoe Ministry. Today we pray that every child will know that they are a beloved child of God. To learn more, visit our website at fmcm.org/ZOE, or for the prayer guide go to fmcm.org/ZOE-Tanzania.

Today is Monday, August 19 and we are exploring how God's goodness and mercy follow us.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed Lord God, thank You for loving me. I come to this quiet place and seek Your presence. I calm my scattered thoughts, release my worries and slow my breath. I focus on the goodness and mercy You promise. The goodness and mercy that follow me. Great Shepherd of my soul, open the ears of my heart to hear the message You have for me today. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever. Psalm 23:1-6 (RSV)

REFLECTION

As summer comes to a close and students, teachers and administrators head back to school, we are near completion of our summer study of the 23rd Psalm. This week we have reached the final verse and focus on these words, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." There are two ways we might look at how God's goodness and mercy follow us. The first way is that God is the one who follows us. He comes after us. He pursues us with His love and He consistently brings goodness and mercy into our lives. The second way to understand how goodness and mercy follow us is that we leave a trail of goodness and mercy behind us. Because God first loved us and showered us with goodness and mercy, we live a life of love and bless others with goodness and mercy. We love others because we have been so well loved.

The Psalmist, David, was so sure that God was with him like a loving Shepherd, He began today's verse with the word "surely." David did not say "maybe" God would bring goodness and mercy into his life. He did not say "probably" God would bring goodness and mercy into his life. He said "surely." David is sure. Like David, we can rest confidently knowing that no matter what happens in life, God is with us and He is surely bringing goodness and mercy into every situation, circumstance and relationship.

God knows we need both goodness and mercy. We need goodness because we are prone to wander, trespass and veer from the path into danger. We need goodness because we live in a broken world, surrounded by unkindness, difficulties and challenges. God brings goodness into our heart and life through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. We need mercy because God knows no matter how hard we try on our own, we will sometimes fall short and we will fail. God looks upon our weaknesses with compassion, is eager to forgive us and show us mercy and kindness.

Because we have been shown such goodness and mercy by God, we are invited to show goodness and mercy to others. When we recognize how God has followed us with goodness and mercy, we develop a compassionate heart toward the weaknesses and failings of the people around us. Goodness and mercy become a way of life for the Christian. Every moment of every day gives us boundless opportunities to pour goodness into the life of someone else. We can follow people with love and bless them with goodness. We can show compassion and demonstrate mercy. We can offer forgiveness. As God follows us with goodness and mercy, we follow others with goodness and mercy.

Ask: How have I experienced God's goodness and mercy in my life? How can I show someone goodness or offer mercy today?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy and loving God, thank You for bringing goodness into my life. Thank You for showering me with mercy and offering me forgiveness. You patiently and consistently show kindness and love to me despite my failings and misguided choices. Fill my heart with compassion for others, open my eyes to opportunities to love them, inspire me to demonstrate goodness and shine mercy. Help me forgive others as you have forgiven me. Amen.